

CEDAW STATEMENT

Protection of Girls' Right to Education

Adopted on 19 October 2012 during the 53rd session

Girls' and women's right to education is a central obligation of States parties under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the CEDAW Convention). This obligation is set out in articles 2 and 10 of the CEDAW Convention as well as in other international human rights documents such as the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All (EFA) Dakar Framework for Action.

In spite of the seeming global consensus on the right of girls and women to education, and although globally, the illiterate population is shrinking, illiteracy continues to be a feminized phenomenon, particularly in certain regions of the world. In 2009, there were 35 million girls of primary school age and 37 million lower secondary level girls, who were out of school. As a result of these trends over time, of the reported 793 million adults lacking basic literacy skills, 508 million (66%) are female.

The Committee is therefore appalled by the recent incident in Pakistan where Malala Yousufzai, a 14 year old school girl, was brutally attacked and shot in the north-western frontier of Pakistan while calling for the right of girls for education, bringing into sharp focus the extreme danger that some girls face in claiming and enjoying this basic human right in keeping with articles 2 (a) and 10 (b) of the CEDAW Convention. Malala is now fighting for her life in a British hospital, for no other reason than that she was bold enough to take an unwavering stance and boldly speak out on this critical issue. The Committee recognises Malala's unprecedented role as a youth advocate for girls' education and notes that the Government of Pakistan awarded her a national peace prize in 2011.

The activism of Malala and her schoolmates on the right of girls to education and that of numerous other girls who have experienced similar discrimination and risks, reflects deep understanding of the crux of the problem that hinders girls' free access to and choices in the field of education: the persistence of a patriarchal system that serves traditional interest and motive

which combine to maintain the *status quo* and perpetuate male privilege, particularly in the field of education and the workforce.

The Committee calls on the States parties to denounce and punish such acts of violence and to continue to take all necessary action, including the dismantling of patriarchal barriers and entrenched gender stereotypes, to guarantee and to ensure that girls are able to enjoy their basic human right to education in every region of the world.
